

REMARKS

In the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner required restriction of the examination of the application to one of two groups of claims: Group I (Claims 1-14) and Group II (Claims 15-20). Applicants hereby affirm the prior telephonic election of Group 1 and withdraw claims 15-20 without prejudice.

In the outstanding Office Action, claim 11 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite and as an improper hybrid claim. Claim 13 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112 as contradicting claim 1, to which it depends.

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 1, 4 and 6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by European patent application number EP 413164 A1 (Muckenhirn). Claims 3, 5, 10-12, and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Muckenhirn. Claim 2 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Muckenhirn in view of U.S. patent number US 6,435,339 (Kroupa). Claims 6 and 7 were rejected 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Muckenhirn in view of U.S. patent application number US 2001/0019022 (Nakao et al.) or U.S. patent number US 5,224,593 (Bennett). Claims 8 and 9 were rejected 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Muckenhirn in view of U.S. patent number 4,784,258 (Figari). Claim 13 was rejected 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Muckenhirn in view of U.S. patent number US 4,823,944 (Ryder) or U.S. patent number US 3,089,500 (Stalcup).

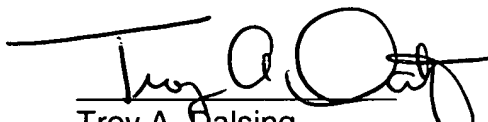
By this Amendment, Applicants have canceled claims 1-14 and have withdrawn claims 15-20 from consideration. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that Examiner's objections and rejections have been addressed and that those objections and rejections no longer apply to the current application.

By this Amendment, Applicants have introduced new claims 21-40. Accordingly, claims 21-40 are pending in this application. Therefore, the same number of independent claims (3) and dependent claims (17) are now pending in the application as were in the application as filed. Applicants, therefore, submit that no additional examination fees are due. If this is incorrect, Applicants request that Examiner notify Applicants of any necessary additional fees so that Applicants can submit such fees in a timely manner. No new matter has been added by this Amendment, and Applicants submit that claims 21-40 are novel in light of the art cited by Examiner in his prior objections and rejections of claims 1-14.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,

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